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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6788
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4517
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3138
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7661
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1736
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5071
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/Libya, Syria/UN, Syria/France, Iraq, Lebanon,
Palestinian Territories (5/10)

¶1. Summary: Syrian press on May 10 reported President Asad's meeting on May 9 with Libyan Prime Minister El-Baghdadi Ali al-Mahmoudi. This is the first high level meeting between the two countries for years. Talks dealt with bilateral relations, mutual cooperation, and topics on the agenda of the Syrian-Libyan Joint Higher Committee, which inaugurated its deliberations in Damascus on May 9. Al-Mahmoudi was also received by PM Otri, with whom he discussed mutual cooperation and means of enhancing it in all fields, in the interest of both peoples.

Papers also reported that President Asad received a telephone call from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on May 9 to talk about issues that were earlier discussed by the two sides during Ki-Moon's recent visit to Damascus.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses bilateral relations and mutual cooperation with Libyan Prime Minister al-Baghdadi Ali al-Mahmoudi. Meeting of the Syrian-Libyan Joint Committee is necessary to expand investment opportunities and to increase trade" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/10)

"President Asad receives a telephone call from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon within the framework of continuing coordination with the UN" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/10)

"The Joint Syrian-Libyan Higher Committee commences its deliberations in Damascus. PM Otri and his Libyan counterpart al-Mahmudi: Our cooperation serves our common interests" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/10)

"60 percent of Americans support scheduling withdrawal of US troops from Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/10)

"Tehran seeks to help Washington in Iraq. Zebari talks about the possibility of releasing the five Iranian hostages held by US forces" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/10)

"Killing and injury of 7 US soldiers since Cheney's arrival to Baghdad" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/10)

"General Aoun: The Parliament is not qualified to elect a new president" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/10)

"A new Israeli incursion into Gaza amid heavy criticism" (Independent al-Watan, 5/10)

"Speaker of the Italian Parliament breaks EU siege on Palestinians" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/10)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"France under New Presidency"

Isam Dari, Chief Editor of government-owned Tishreen, commented (5/10): "Syria is looking ahead with hope that the Syrian-French relations will witness positive development to serve the interests of the two countries and peoples as well as the region's peace and security...."

"Syria, which seeks to build the best and strongest relations with all countries of the world without exception on the basis of reciprocal treatment, common interests, and noninterference in domestic affairs, is extremely eager to have special relations with France. Today it respects the will of the French people and their democratic option...."

"The difficulties that Syrian-French relations have witnessed in the past few years were a result of pure personal positions and the personalization of the political situation against the will of the French people and the interests of France...."

"Sarkozy became the president of France through the will and choice of the French people. It is natural for the new president to express the interests of his country and people and pursue policies that embody this on the ground. The French president knows the size of France's interests in the Arab countries and the region in general, and we do not think he will look at the Arab world with indifference...."

"Exaggerated Mistakes"

Omar Jaftali, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, said (5/10): "The Pentagon has announced that more troops will be deployed in Iraq.... The White House spokesman stated that attacks against US forces in Iraq are expected to escalate in the future.... This shows that the Bush administration, with its hawks and Zionized figures, is ignoring all American, Arab, and international criticisms and demands and is, indeed, determined to proceed with its hostile military plan against Iraq and its people and against the Arab region in general...."

"What is more surprising is that administration officials do not care about their dead and about the future of their soldiers, who have been pushed into useless battles with no honorable objective, battles that only harm the reputation of the United States and the American people...."

"Some Arabs Need a Winograd Commission"

Khalid al-Ashhab, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/10): "The Winograd report is being discussed, even by some Arabs, in a way suggesting that it was natural and logical for

Israel to prevail in its war on Lebanon....

"It is very well understandable that Israel is trying to turn its military defeat in Lebanon into a political and diplomatic victory, but it is neither understandable nor justifiable that some Arabs are failing to maintain their victory, or, at least, are turning it into a psychological defeat....

"Israel needed an investigation commission to discover the reasons behind its failure to complete a crime. How many commissions of this type do some Arabs need to know the reasons behind their complete crime of abandoning the honorable resistance, and indeed of inciting against it?"

"Seeds of Sedition"

Mihriz al-Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/10): "The security plan that the US Administration presented to the Palestinian Authority carries the seeds of sedition.... It represents an indirect call for Palestinian civil strife....

"The plan does not take into consideration the Palestinian people's suffering as a result of Israel's isolating policy. The removal of some Israeli roadblocks does not fulfill minimum Palestinian requirements. To those who say the plan is necessary as a confidence-building measure: How can confidence be built while more than 11,000 Palestinian detainees, including ministers and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, suffer the ugliest forms of torture in Israeli prisons?

"Palestinians must demonstrate further solidarity and national unity to confront and foil such hostile plans...."

"The Satanic Alliance"

Hanan Hamad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/10): "No one is unaware of the US pressures being exerted on moderate Arabs to revive the process of achieving a political settlement of the Arab-Zionist conflict on Israeli terms.

"These terms call for setting up an Arab-Israeli alliance to confront the so-called 'Iranian danger,' on the pretext that Iran's threat to Israel is no less than its threat to the Arab states....

"What is worse is the fact that there are some people among the advocates of the Palestinian issue, or, rather, the ones who claim this honor, who defend this deal and promote the idea of the possibility of unifying Arab and Israeli stands toward the alleged 'Iranian danger.'

"What makes this move attractive is the notion that it will be preceded by a resolution to the Palestinian issue, on the grounds that this issue is a top priority and that a resolution to it will help establish such an alliance....

"It is sad that the political agenda of some Palestinians must stoop this low. Also, it is sad that they must promote this alliance with the devil against an alleged danger by turning Iran -- an effective strategic ally in the face of the Zionist enemy -- into an enemy more dangerous than Israel itself, only because Tehran is considering the use of nuclear technology to serve its people's economy and prosperity....

"Nevertheless, what hurts most is that this deal is being promoted at a time when the Olmert government and the Bush administration are suffering deadlock with regard to the occupation of Palestine and Iraq, now that the resistance action in both Arab countries and in Lebanon has put the myth of the invincible force to the test.

"Instead of capitalizing on the July victory and the Iraqi

resistance's ability to hit the US occupation army painfully to impose Arab conditions on any possible settlement, there are some Arabs who are losing self-respect and harming their people's dignity in order to buoy up Bush and Olmert and save them from their ordeal."

Corbin